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From a painting by Gilbert Gaul.

"THE CAPTAIN."

# The Quarterly Illustrator

Vol. I.      October, November, and December, 1893

No. 4

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## AN AMERICAN MILITARY ARTIST.

BY GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

(*With original illustrations by Gilbert Gaul.*)



"TORCH-BEARERS."

GILBERT GAUL—one of the best known of our American illustrators as well as of painters in oil, who has gained renown in the treatment of two almost distinct classes of figure subjects—must have been born, one would think, with a brush in his hand and a pencil behind his ear, so clever is he in the handling of those artistic implements, and so natural to him seems their use.

He began painting at a very early age; and it was a good while ago that I saw the first of his pictures, which comes back to me as having made an impression that has not since been effaced. He was then already a skilled exhibitor at the Academy. This picture (the title of which I cannot give with certainty, though it may have been something like "The Color Guard") represented an episode of stub-



"WINTER SPORT."

born fighting in some battle of the Civil War. A broken line or group of Union soldiers, evidently hard pressed, was seen facing—if I recollect rightly—the spectator, who thus occupied the position of the supposed attacking force. The attack was not shown in the picture, or at most was barely indicated.

The defenders were the whole subject: they only were placed before us,

powder-stained, resolute, firing, re-loading, or grasping their weapons in expectancy of closer combat, and evidently determined to sell their lives dearly or retreat only when overpowered. From the presentation of this one side of the fight, the other side could be realized easily and with great intensity. The picture, therefore, in addition to its merits of drawing, painting, vividness, and character, was a fine instance of imaginative power and



"A WELCOME DRAUGHT."

also of the power of exciting imagination in the beholder.

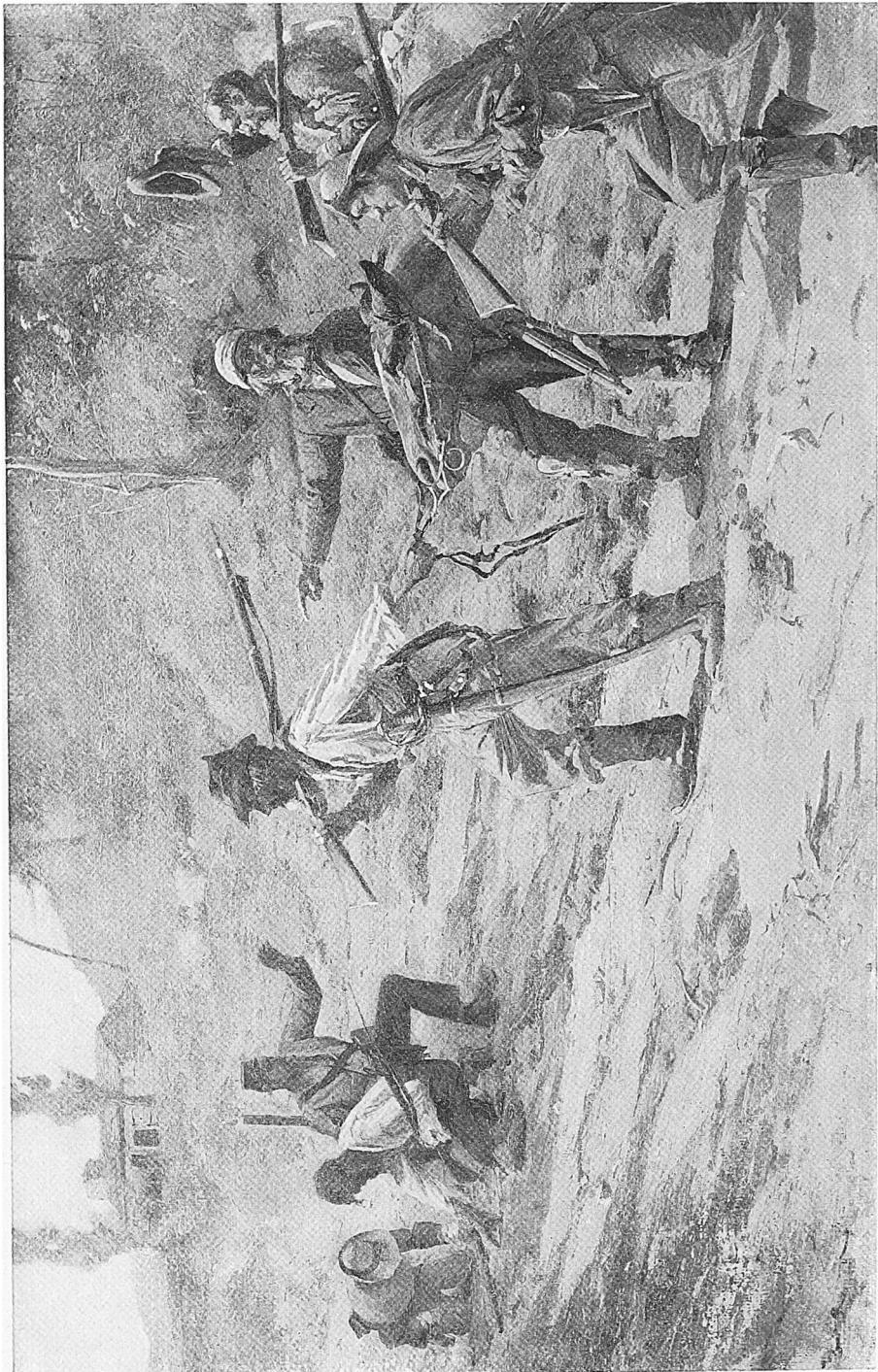
If I refer now to a poem of mine, it is as a connecting link between Mr. Gaul's painting and his black-and-white illustrative work. This poem, "Marthy Virginia's Hand," for which he made a drawing, appeared in *The Century Magazine* some three years since. It related an actual incident of the war; how a Confederate soldier was found dead in a strip of woods on the battle-field of Antietam, grasping a letter in which his wife had told of the birth of a baby and had made a tracing of the



"NIGHT IN CAMP."



"THE SHARP-SHOOTER."

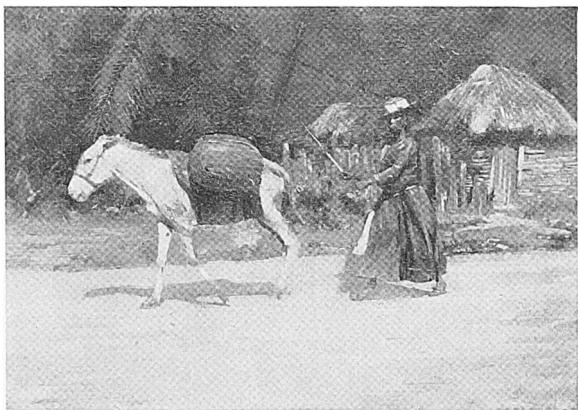


"ON THE TRAIL."

child's hand on the paper. In his illustration Mr. Gaul depicted the soldier lying dead there, neglected, amid the trees, near a mossy rock ; the tangled rootlets and thick, small branches, the glints of sunlight, the shattered gun, and the leaves and twigs flung down about him by a shell which had burst there, all adding to the grimness and pathos for which his war scenes are remarkable.

But, as has been hinted, Mr.

Gaul is by no means confined to this sort of theme, and is, indeed, distinguished in two "lines," as we sometimes call them. It is true, I think, that he has by nature a special *penchant* for these severe and sad yet highly picturesque and stirring realities of armed combat. Yet he is also extremely apt and graphic in the delineation of more peaceful domestic scenes involving both earnestness and humor, brightened by the costume and the romance of a century's antiquity, or belonging to the



"THE WATER SELLER."



"THE CONFEDERATE RAFT."

*Gilbert Gaul.*

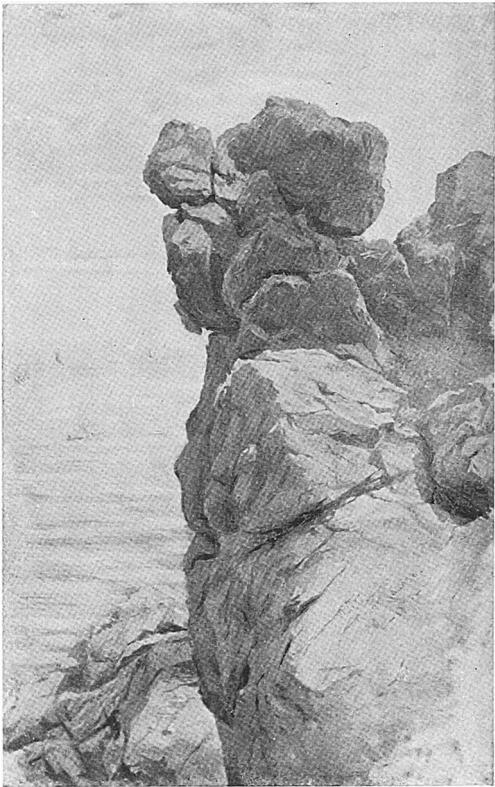


"SCOUTING."

although they often had a spice of tempered wit.

It is the ability of Mr. Gaul to portray things opposite in themselves, and not only to draw the contrast, but also to emphasize it by his treatment, which gives him a mastery of *genre*—that is, of dealing with subjects that may be rated as exemplifying a “species,” a “kind,” or to take another word, “the characteristic.” He knows how to seize a character in many of its bearings at once, and to give it the proper accent.

The manner in which he uses landscape detail in some of his work is also very effective. Evidently the result of careful study, and, like many of his touches in the elaborating of figures, subtile in resources of art, it never loses that energy and solidity which pervade his illustrations. See, for example, his drawings for “Personal Impressions of Nicaragua,” where he accompanied himself with the pen, supplying his own text.



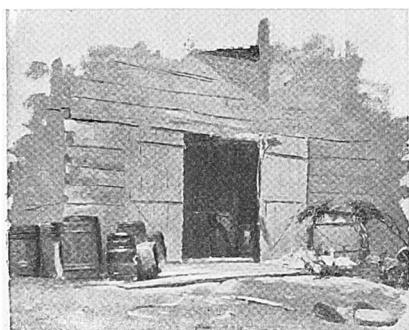
"TOP OF THE CLIFF."

vigorous out-door and in-door reality of to-day. Seldom does one find the genius for reproducing military phases united with so versatile a faculty as Mr. Gaul's for picturing, in his illustrations, glimpses of daily human life in a variety of surroundings.

Meissonier prided himself upon his military achievements—on canvas; but his military pieces had not the true war-like quality; they merely multiplied the polished little men of his interior scenes, and transferred them out-of-doors. Nor did his “interiors” contain much diversity of human traits, or genuine feeling and humor,

The "Parrot Sellers at Corinto," in that little group of sketches, is very striking in its combination of boats, outspread bird-wings, the weird hooded figure of a woman standing upright, and the swirl and stretch of moving waters. So, too, one may find a good deal of his various skill in his pictorial contributions to Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Old Portsmouth Profiles."

Mr. Gaul's work, often spirited, is always forcible and interesting. Moreover, while by no means a *poseur* in art or given over to any



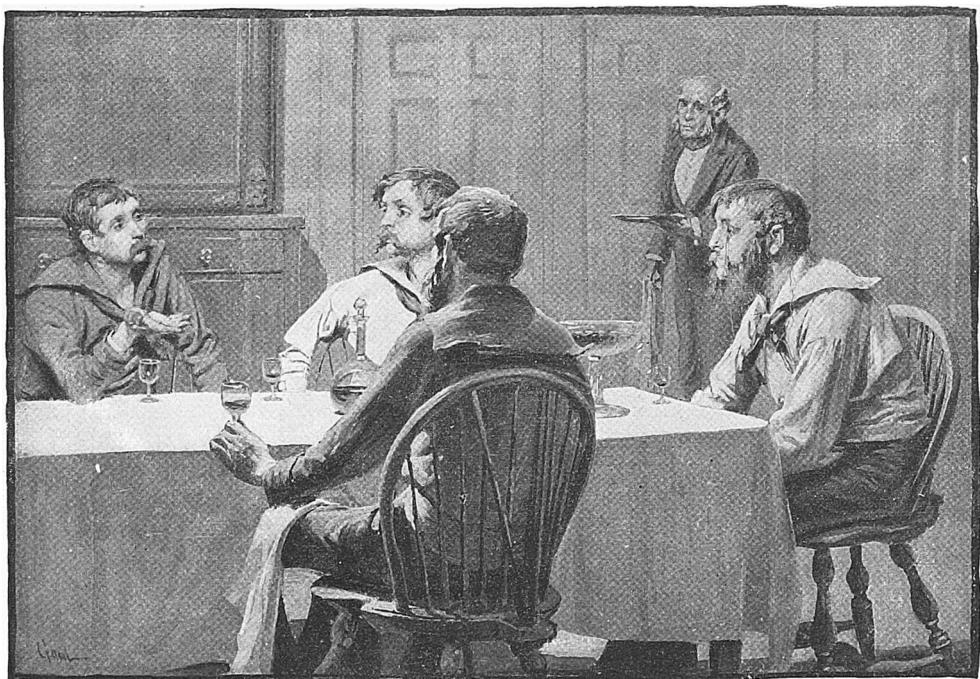
"THE DOORWAY."

special  
fashion  
or school,  
he has a  
happy  
faculty of  
posing his

subjects from unexpected points of view, bringing out their value at once by a bold stroke, often in a way which at first one would hardly have thought he would venture, yet a way that proves to be natural as well as effective.



"A WEST INDIAN MOTHER."



"A PLAIN NARRATIVE."